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NIGHT WATCH

Ordinary ingredients dull a saga of spies

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The Spy Killer, Ch. 7

"Movie of the Week" has been a great one for private eyes and spies in recent outings — like "The Monk" and "The Pigeon." So last night it combined both action genres in still another suspense yarn that was distinguished mainly by its extra bit of deviousness.

"The Spy Killer" had at least the ingredients of professionalism and smoothness which were sadly lacking in last week's inept "The Pigeon." But it rated as little more than standard B fare.

This was a British-produced venture that starred Robert Horton as a detective-for-hire drawn into a world of espionage and intrigue by an ex-wife's story that she needed evidence to procure a divorce from her second mate on rather shabby grounds.

Then followed a series of cloak-and-dagger confrontations and murders revolving around a mysterious notebook containing the names of 15 U.S. agents operating in Red China.

There was enough hocus pocus here to fill a dozen notebooks — pad switches, counterplots, elaborate rendezvous ranging from an abandoned airfield in the British hinterlands to a posh golf course in France.

Naturally Horton — an old hand at this sort of thing as a former CIA agent — keeps a step ahead of all the conniving and comes out with his life intact and a few bob in the bargain, despite two jailings, numerous contusions and a final shootout in which he outmaneuvers two pursuers intent on killing him.

The flavor was supplied by bewhiskered Sebastian Cabot as a double-crossing CIA mastermind, Jill St. John as an accommodating dish in love with the hero, Lee Montague as a slick Albanian counterspy, and assorted others, mostly goons.

Chalk this up as a spy saga that failed because it tried to whip up too fancy a repast with ordinary ingredients — like the name of its protagonist, John Smith.